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Seeing through African protest logics: a longitudinal review of continuity and change in protests in Ghana

Lewis Abedi Asante[a,b] and Ilse Helbrecht[a]

[a]Department of Geography, Humboldt-Universität Zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany; [b]Department of Estate Management, Kumasi Technical University, Kumasi, Ghana

ABSTRACT

Protests in Africa have a long history. Yet, for many years, western misconceptions in protest studies have hindered our understanding of the particularities and commonalities of African protests. In this study, we scrutinize the historical continuity and discontinuity of protests in Africa, using Ghana as a case. We situate a longitudinal analysis of protests in Ghana within the theoretical model of protest logics, using the institutional-analytical method. The study finds historical continuity largely in terms of proletarian (high cost of living, dispossession and inadequate infrastructure), republican (participatory governance and corruption) and corporatist (working conditions and unemployment) mobilisation themes in Ghana. These themes are underpinned by the processes of class struggle, accumulation by (urban) dispossession, neoliberalism, splintered urbanism, gentrification and corruption. The implication of this study is that contemporary protests in Africa would be influenced by issues such as high cost of living, participatory governance, erratic power supply, unemployment, poor road infrastructure and corruption. These issues should be prioritized in the agenda of African governments in order to avert spontaneous protests.

KEYWORDS

Protest; proletarian; corporatist; republican; Ghana

RÉSUMÉ

L'Afrique a une longue histoire de protestations. Pourtant les idées fausses émanant des études sur ces mouvements ont entravé notre compréhension des particularités et des similitudes des manifestations en Afrique. Dans cette étude, nous examinons la continuité et la discontinuité des mouvements de protestation en Afrique, en nous appuyant sur le cas du Ghana. Nous situons une analyse longitudinale des protestations au Ghana dans le modèle théorique de la logique de protestation, en utilisant la méthode institutionnelle-analytique. L'étude révèle une continuité historique se déclinant largement en thèmes de mobilisation prolétarienne (coût élevé de la vie, dépossession et infrastructures inadéquates), républicaine (gouvernance participative et corruption) et corporatiste (conditions de travail et chômage) au Ghana. Ces thèmes sont étayés par des processus de lutte des classes, d'accumulation par la dépossession (urbaine), de néolibéralisme, d'éparpillement urbain, de gentrification et de corruption. Cette étude implique que les protestations contemporaines en Afrique sont influencées par des questions comme celles du coût élevé de la vie, de la gouvernance participative, de la fourniture irrégulière

MOTS-CLÉS

Protestation; prolétarien; corporatiste; républicain; Ghana

CONTACT Lewis Abedi Asante asanteal@gmail.com; lewis.abedi.asante@geo.hu-berlin.de

d'électricité, du chômage, des infrastructures routières médiocres et de la corruption. Ces questions devraient être prioritaires dans les programmes gouvernementaux africains pour éviter que ne se produisent des protestations spontanées.

I. Introduction

For many years, several popular protests have occurred in many cities around the world and during these times many analysts have offered careful explanation of why they happen in particular instances and in general (Gurr 1970). Protests have been driven by the demand for social goods and services, the search for spatial meaningfulness and cultural identity, the drift towards local autonomy (Castells 1983), the erosion of traditional welfare rights, new competitive forms of urban development, expansion of the urban political system (Mayer 2000), urban-based class struggle (Harvey 2012), labour conditions (Helbrecht et al. 2017) and low citizen participation in decision making platforms (Awuah 1997; Castells 1983; Hasson 1993; Lowe 1986). In Africa and in many parts of the developing world, protests have derived from the fight for independence from colonial authorities, the effects of structural adjustment programmes, opposition to authoritarian and military regimes (Bratton and Van De Walle 1992; Gocking 2005; Obeng-Odoom 2017; Sayeed 1979; Seddon and Zeilig 2005) and more recently 'the intensifying globalisation of the last decades' (Mayer 2000, 141). The 2011 Arab spring, the 2016 students' protests in South Africa and the 2017 electoral reform protest in Togo, which challenged the monopoly of force exercised by the state, and in some cases, disrupted normal political, social and economic processes (Gurr 1970), are a few recent examples of how protests have thrown African nations or sub-regions into a state of chaos and anarchy. Protests continue to claim lives, while leaving several others injured or permanently disabled (McLaughlin and Owusu-Ansah 1995). Governments have been overthrown through contemporary citizen protests (Bogaert 2013; Bratton and Van De Walle 1992). Nevertheless, participants of contemporary protests in the developing world do not necessarily seek to overthrow governments as in the 1970s and 1980s; rather they intend to transform them from within and compel them to alter their political or economic decisions (Vairel 2011) and to be recognised as 'critical urban planning agents' (De Souza 2006). More so, the occasional benefits of protests cannot be overemphasised, as many times, these events have successfully changed the status quo, although some have had negligible effects. It is clear that in order to reduce the incidence of protests, governments must be more accommodative and prioritize the concerns and plight of the citizenry. If not, society would continue to witness not only the good but also the bad and the ugly sides of protests.

The critical question posed by this study is: do current trends of popular protests show continuity with the underlying causes of past protests and which changes in protest logics can be observed? This question is particularly important because it, first, enables us to historically situate and geographically contextualize the emergence and evolution of protests in Africa. Because of the (dominant) western misconception in protest studies in Africa, such a longitudinal perspective helps us understand the

particularities and commonalities of African protests. Second, only longitudinal perspective can trace the fundamental dynamics that shape recent protests. As noted by Obeng-Odoom (2017, 6), 'tensions … would entangle most policies that do not address historical and structural economic issues.'

Methodologically, we use the protest logics theoretical model to dwell on the experience of Ghana, an African country with a particularly long history of protest. Ghana makes for an interesting case study, because from its early contact with colonial authorities, through independence to present times, the country has witnessed all shades of protests, reflected in the selected episodes of this study. Therefore, it is unsurprising that Ghana is the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to gain independence from the British colonial authorities. Nowadays however, the continuous occurrence of protests challenges Ghana's status as one of the relatively stable democracies in Africa. This notwithstanding, contemporary Ghana deserves commendation for its ability to control protests from degenerating into national chaotic situations, as witnessed in other parts of Africa in recent times. The episodes included in this study are carefully selected on the basis of their historical significance and popularity in the literature. In this study, we situate these episodes of protests in a longitudinal analysis to demonstrate that the underlying causes of recent protests date as far back as colonial times. Longitudinal research is important because it shows the relationship between the past, present and future trends of a particular phenomenon. However, such longitudinal analysis is not common in the literature on protests in Africa and elsewhere.

Previous literature on African protests have very often analysed the dynamics of specific protests at country level (Engels 2015a, 2015b; Harsch 1998, 2009), sub-regional level (Bogaert 2013; Joffe 2011; Zemni and Bogaert 2011) or continent level (Bratton and Van De Walle 1992; De Waal and Ibreck 2013; Obeng-Odoom 2017; Seddon and Zeilig 2005). These studies generally conceptualize African protests as responses to the 'undesirable' outcomes of neoliberal urban governance. In Ghana, a considerable number of protest studies have concentrated on colonial protests (Danquah 1994, 2003; Gocking 2005; Howard 1976; Isreal 1992; Johnson 1972; McLaughlin and Owusu-Ansah 1995; Simensen 1974, 1975) and post-colonial protests up to the 1990s (Awuah 1997; Gocking 2005; Kraus 1991, 2007; Opoku 2010), with very few on contemporary protests (Aidoo 2014). While collectively these works provide relevant information on protests on Ghana, they lack a detailed historical analysis of protests and its associated underlying processes. Consequently, this study seeks to undertake an analysis of the old and contemporary literature in order to tease out protest trends in Ghana, conceptualize the processes that contribute to these protests, and highlight its socio-economic and political implications for Ghana and the rest of Africa. This study is anchored on the argument that the western misconception in protest studies in Africa has limited a better appreciation of the dynamics in the continent. This study argues that colonial protests in Ghana were largely a collective effort of mass action and the educated elites and involved rural and urban people. The processes that underlie colonial protests in Ghana are conceptualised as class struggle and accumulation by dispossession. However, in post-colonial times, the social composition of protests has been mainly urban, comprising of urban formal sector workers, market traders, students and citizen groups among many others. This study shows that urban processes of neoliberalism, gentrification, accumulation by urban dispossession and splintered urbanism have

contributed to post-colonial and contemporary protests in Ghana. The rest of the study is organised as follows. The next section discusses the theoretical framework. The third section briefly outlines the methodology. Section four analyses the dynamics of colonial protests in Ghana. In the fifth section, we examine protests from Ghana's independence to the end of the twentieth century. The sixth section discusses contemporary protests and the last section concludes the study.

II. Theoretical framework

In recent times, studies have indicated that Africa, over the years, has fundamentally experienced about four waves of protests. The first wave is believed to have occurred during the independence struggle in many colonies in Africa. The second wave is associated with the hardship that structural adjustment programmes brought onto the African people. The democratic or political transition that swept most parts of Africa in the 1990s is identified as the third wave. The most recent wave is understood as "the global dissent framed explicitly as anti-capitalism" (Seddon and Zeilig 2005, 22). In other words, Branch and Mampilly (2015, 70) have argued that "today's protest wave represents a vehement rejection of the neoliberal economy by Africa's poor." This kind of analysis constructs African protests as a recurrent struggle of Africans against the hegemony of colonialism, neo-colonialism or neo-imperialism. It seems nothing is ever understood as unique about protests in Africa without a connection with the dynamics or models in the western or global politics. However, such western models, as argued by Branch and Mampilly (2015), favours the understanding that "only" civil society or trade unions have the muscles to pressure the state into reform based on clear political demands.

Consequently, scholars are quick to judge the nature of African protests by the character of the organisations or groups that lead such protests. It is therefore unsurprising that tracing back to history, we have been made to understand virtually all African protests as championed by the nationalist leaders, trade unions or the middle class without an in-depth appreciation of how the protest actually started and the role played by the poor majority or mass action. In Africa, there is more to protest than occurs in the urban context or under the umbrella of civil society or middle class. But, the western misconception in protest studies in Africa has narrowed our understanding. For instance, David Drakakis-Smith (as cited in Obeng-Odoom 2013) makes the assertion that "only" formal protests by trade unions in developing countries may be acceptable to the government. However, such protests exclude the urban poor because they are underemployed and tend to fall outside the usual requirements of trade union membership. He conceptualised protests among the urban poor in developing countries in the form of illegality, squatting on public lands and engaging in informal economic activities. Similarly, in many instances, protests by the urban poor in Africa that have made headlines on international media have been described as rioting or looting (Branch and Mampilly 2015) because they do not reflect the conventional model known in the global north.

Although it is not disputed that African protests have international dimension, Branch and Mampilly (2015, 7) have argued that the understanding of African protests "cannot be read from models imported from other historical experiences of what proper protest

is supposed to look like." Rather, protest, irrespective of where it occurs, must be analysed from the people's specific political and economic context, historical experience and present conditions (Branch and Mampilly 2015) and their interrelationships. Branch and Mampilly have also indicated that there exists historical continuity in the underlying social-economic and political factors of protest in Africa. Nevertheless, over the years, a theoretical model that enables us to understand this historical continuity from country-level perspective has been difficult to come by. A 2014 488-page edited book titled *Liberalism and its Discontents: Social Movements in West Africa* by Ndongo Samba Sylla has sought to fill this void by proposing a contemporary theoretical framework for understanding protest in Africa. In Table 1, Sylla (2014) proposes five main protest logics, comprising of liberal, republican, partisan, corporatist and proletarian. In simple terms, liberal protest logic is influenced by the desire to protect the interest of marginalised or minority groups; the logic of republican protests aims to ensure that governments comply with the principles of liberal democracy; protest that fits within the partisan logic is motivated by the interest of political groups to gain weight within the political game; corporatist logic aims at defending the interest of a socio-professional group who may have been affected by a government policy or failure of state structures; and proletarian logic connotes protests that protect the interest of the vast majority of the society and not a minority or professional group. Additionally, there

Table 1. Protest logics.

	Characteristics of protest logics			
Protest logics	Nature of the public demand	Mobilisation themes	Types of actors	Interest taken into account
Liberal	Protecting and strengthening the rights of minorities. Equal protection from the law for specific social groups	Discrimination, rights of women, gays, migrants, the disabled, refugees, etc.	Feminist movements, international and local NGOs specialised in the defence of human rights	Interests of groups perceived as minority or victims of discrimination
Republican	Ensuring that existing political regimes (democratic or not) comply with the principles of liberal democracy	Transparency of public processes. Rule of Law and good governance. Upholding the constitution. Separation of powers, participatory democracy	Intellectuals, journalists, civil society actors, citizen movements, etc.	Public interest (of the community of citizens)
Partisan	Conquering power, preserving it or gaining weight within the political game	Denunciation of injustices, the partisan nature and the incompetence of adversaries, etc.	Political parties, religious organisations, ethnic-based political groups, etc.	Partisan interests (party, ethnic group, religion, community, etc.)
Corporatist	Protecting the material and moral interests of members of the corporation	Working conditions, protecting social rights, etc.	Trade unions, student organisation, informal sector workers, etc.	Interests of the members of the corporation
Proletarian	Resisting the deterioration of living conditions of the majority	Socio-economic inequalities, access to basic social services, high cost of living, economic marginalisation and dispossession, etc.	Ordinary citizens, community-based associations, popular classes, etc.	Interests of society (popular and middle classes, etc.)

Source: Sylla (2014)

could be cross-cutting protest logics which comprise two or more of the protest logics. Some brief characteristics of each of the protest logics have been outlined in Table 1.

There are four analytical advantages of using the protest logics, Sylla (2014) argues, as a "way of seeing". Firstly, not all protest activities are considered as being an outcome of the logic supposed to be followed by the group that leads them. For instance, a trade union can, in some circumstances, make demands of a proletarian nature. Secondly, protest logics framework does not lump together those who are protesting and the beneficiaries of their struggle. In this regard, an individual can fight against specific forms of discrimination or injustice without being a victim himself. Thirdly, the issue of representation of protests is resolved within this framework because it recognises that not all protests are led by popular classes or the usual suspects but could also be influenced by partisan or corporatist considerations. Lastly, the model makes us understand that protests do not have the same potential in terms of social or political transformation. While some may be able to adjust to the liberal-capitalist economy, others are able to overcome it. This is consistent with the argument by Branch and Mampilly (2015, 10) that African protests should not necessarily be judged on the basis on whether it is able to achieve its explicit political or economic demands, but

> should be understood according to how it attempts to transform the national political questions that structure state power and how protest answers, avoids or is torn apart by the deep political dilemmas that may require resolution for democratic change to take hold.

The theoretical model of protest logics is a good "way of seeing" and is adopted for the present study.

In addition to the protest logics, we follow in the footsteps of Obeng-Odoom (2012) and Adarkwa (2013) who have employed the institutional-analytical method to analyse how Ghanaian cities and towns have evolved from colonial era to present times. According to Obeng-Odoom, the institutional-analytical method builds on textual analysis (teasing out the intent of authors from the original text), contextual analysis (taking into consideration the mood of the time period), historical narratives (synthesising past and present stories) and rational reconstructions (re-analysis of old texts and making sense of them in contemporary context) (Obeng-Odoom 2012, 122).

III. Methodology

The analysis in this article is based on a literature review and desktop research of relevant and available secondary data on protests in Ghana, while also gaining insight from protest literature on other African countries. The literature and secondary data were gathered from two main sources: journals and books. Key concepts such as protest, protest in Ghana, urban protest, rural protest, and African protest among many others were adopted in carrying out a search in online databases. The references of the first set of materials obtained from the search were helpful in gathering additional data. In total, more than sixty published documents that report on protests in Ghana and Africa were reviewed for this study. Secondary data obtained from these documents were organised and analysed to provide relevant evidence to the subject of study. Existing protest studies (Aidoo 2014; Bratton and Van De Walle 1992; Danquah 1994; De Waal and

Ibreck 2013; Engels 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2017; Howard 1976; Isreal 1992; Kraus 2007) provided an important context on the dynamics of protests in Africa, with a specific focus on Ghana. Key literature on colonial protests (Danquah 1994; Fortescue 1990; Gocking 2005; Howard 1976; Isreal 1992; Johnson 1972; Killingray 1983; Simensen 1974), post-colonial protests (Awuah 1997; Gocking 2005; Ho-Won 1998; Kraus 2007; McLaughlin and Owusu-Ansah 1995; Obeng-Odoom 2014; Opoku 2010) and contemporary protest (Aidoo 2014; Aning and Annan 2015; British Broadcasting Corporation 2014; Silver 2015) in Ghana provided helpful insight for the analysis in this article.

IV. Colonial protests in Ghana

Corporatist protests

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, the British colonial administration restructured governance through the adoption of the indirect rule policy. This policy incorporated traditional authorities (TAs) into the institutional structures of colonial governance and sidelined a group of western-educated Ghanaian elites (WGEs), who hitherto were highly involved in the governance of the colonies. This created an antagonistic group of WGEs who became very critical of colonial rulers. They protested against the indirect rule policy because they felt they were better informed and had the requisite skill and knowledge to represent the interest of the Ghanaian populace in governance more than a group of TAs who were not educated (Gocking 2005). The nature of the demand of the WGEs reflected mainly a corporatist logic of protecting the material interest of the group. However, it must be acknowledged that the main mobilization theme of the indirect rule policy protest was a republican logic of inclusive governance, implying that the protest may have prioritized public interest over the material interest of the WGEs. As expected, this protest brought some friction between the WGEs and the TAs, with the latter refusing to join the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA) which the former had established to seek inclusion in the colonial bureaucracy and the British Legislative Council. Nevertheless, to the colonial authorities, the incorporation of the TAs was of priority because they wanted to extend their domination inland in order to have access to land, a resource the WGEs could not give to them.

Sooner than expected, the WGEs and TAs were back together to protest against the passage of the 1897 Crown Lands Bill, which was to vest all waste lands, forest lands and minerals in the Queen of England. The introduction of the Lands Bill was a smart move by the colonial authorities to control a substantial parcel of land, at a time when trade in timber and gold was on the rise. With the aim of protecting their economic or material interest – a corporatist logic – in the lands, the WGEs and the TAs formed the Gold Coast Aborigines Right Protection Society (GCARPS) in order to have a common mouthpiece. The mobilisation theme was the protection of the social rights of the members of GCARPS. Quickly, a three-member delegation travelled to London to protest the Bill

> and they were able to get the secretary of state, Sir Joseph Chamberlain, to agree to a judicial court that would observe native law, which would deal with the issue of concessions rather than making the Crown the administrator of waste lands. (Gocking 2005, 44)

According to Charles Boateng, "by the end of 1897, the Lands Bill had died, leaving land in the hands of the Gold Coasters" (Boateng 2003, 60). By this feat, the protesters

successfully prevented a process of colonial "accumulation by dispossession," whereby British authorities sought to dispossess Ghanaians of their lands and minerals (Gillespie 2016; Harvey 2003).

Another corporatist protest witnessed in colonial times is the 1948 ex-servicemen protest in Accra. The ex-servicemen[1] registered their discontent about the government's nonfulfillment of wartime promises of employment upon return. Having survived the exchanges of wartime gunshots and trauma, the soldiers had "high expectation of post-war … employment in the public service" (Killingray 1983, 530). As a corporatist protest, their core mobilisation theme was post-war unemployment and meagre or no payment of pensions for the members of the Gold Coast Ex-Servicemen union. Unfortunately, demand for employment by the soldiers exceeded supply, and thus many soldiers struggled to survive in the face of increasing prices of goods and services. The soldiers were not willing to wait patiently for the situation to get better (Gocking 2005). On the 28 February 1948, the soldiers marched to the Christiansburg Castle in Accra to present a petition to the Governor. Isreal (1992, 364) noted that "what began as an orderly parade of unarmed ex-servicemen, singing old war songs and marching in well-defined columns on that Saturday afternoon, ended in confusion, violent confrontation, and days of looting and burning and deaths". Though this protest started as a corporatist protest, it transformed into a proletarian one as many unemployed young men joined the soldiers to protest. Within a period of few weeks, the protest extended throughout the Eastern region towns of Koforidua, Akuse and Nsawam (Danquah 1994). In all, twenty-nine died, between 237 to 266 were injured and over £2 million of damage was caused by the protesters (Danquah 1994; Gocking 2005; Isreal 1992). Studies indicate that the 1948 protests in Accra and other towns in Ghana are not an isolated case, as high unemployment, rising prices and oppressive colonial rule that brought ordinary people to the street were also witnessed in many other African countries (Branch and Mampilly 2015).

Republican protests

In rural communities at the time, the onset of the indirect rule policy had introduced a lot of commoner or mass republican action against traditional authorities, who had become local agents of the colonial authorities. Notably, in many southern states in the Gold Coast, commoner action took place within the framework of the *asafo*,[2] originally an indigenous pre-colonial military formation for the protection of traditional authorities during the days of frequent migration, conquest and wars (Simensen 1975). As indicated in Table 2, Johnson (1972) argued that due to the heavy involvement of the *asafo* in colonial mass protests in Ghana, our understanding of the power relations in colonial times remains limited if we put the spotlight on "only" the power relations between the colonial administration, TAs and the WGEs. Nevertheless, it must be noted that "when [ever] the *asafo* did organise against colonial government in rural areas, educated urban nationalists … usually provided the leadership" (Fortescue 1990, 350).

During the period 1915–1918 through to the 1930s, the *asafo* companies in several states intensified their protest against their TAs, who, as captured in Johnson (1972, 173), were "… the new administrative machinery, little better than second-class administrators used to interpret British policy to [their] people and to secure their loyalty." For instance,

Table 2. Regional distribution of *asafo* protests in Southern Gold Coast – by decade.

Region	1850–89	1890–99	1900–09	1910–19	1920–29
	%	%	%	%	%
Eastern	14.2	50.0	40.4	27.3	25.0
Central	68.8	45.5	48.1	52.3	58.4
Western	2.8	-	7.7	15.9	8.3
Accra	2.8	-	-	4.5	8.3
Volta	11.4	4.5	1.9	-	-
Unknown	-	-	1.9	-	-
Total	100 (35)	100 (18)	100 (52)	100 (44)	100 (12)

Source: Johnson (1972)

in Akim Abuakwa, the *asafo* protests, spanning about three decades, took the form of boycott of the chief's call for communal labour, threat of destoolment of chiefs and assault of chiefs in public. Throughout the period, the protests by the *asafo* companies – with the full backing of the WGEs – in Akim Abuakwa implied a republican demand for larger constitutional role for the commoners, including the right of unilateral destoolment and greater participation in the legislative process (Simensen 1974, 1975). This was to be expected of an Akan community where since pre-colonial times chiefs had been democratically elected and deposed by the ordinary people.

Furthermore, in Kwahu in 1915, the protest by the *asafo* was more cross-cutting in nature (sort of a republican-proleterian logic), as they forced their paramount chief to sign a detailed set of rules[3] regulating social, economic and political affairs of the state and which was later approved by the same paramount chief and his elders as byelaws[4] to be enforced in the Kwahu traditional courts (Simensen 1975). Per the byelaws, fees and fines were drastically reduced below the legally sanctioned amount; extortionate fetish priests were made to refund fees if sick people who sought their help did not recover; the state councils were made more representative; and all trade in foodstuffs was centralised and regulated in order to curb wartime inflation. Although the 1915 byelaw sought to ensure that paramount chiefs practice the republican logic of inclusive governance backed by a legal document, the *asafo* companies also pursued proletarian logic of resisting the deterioration of living conditions of the majority of rural residents.

Furthermore, it is observable in Ghana's political history that whenever a protest concerning colonial policy occurred, "the [WGEs] immediately politicised the government's coercive measures to demand [a republican logic of] political autonomy" (Danquah 1994, 4). Notably, the devastating effect of the 28 February 1948 protest culminated in the arrest of the executives of the United Gold Coast Congress (UGCC)[5] who had taken advantage of the breakdown in public order (Gocking 2005). Meanwhile, the colonial government had responded to the 1948 protest by drawing up the 1949 Constitution, which laid the foundation for partial decolonisation. Confusion about party slogan within the rank and file of the UGCC had resulted in the formation of the Convention People's Party (CPP), led by Kwame Nkrumah. The vociferous and radical "full self-government now" slogan of the CPP, as opposed to the mild "self-government within the shortest possible time" of the UGCC, attracted the attention and support of the people in the rural and urban areas. It is argued that the political mobilization of Kwame Nkrumah was effective because he activated rural-urban connection (Branch and Mampilly 2015). To mount more pressure, Kwame Nkrumah launched his republican

"positive action campaign", which "consist of civil disobedience that would include agitation, propaganda, and at the last resort, the constitutional application of strikes, boycotts and non-cooperation based on the principle of absolute non-violence" (Gocking 2005, 93; De Waal and Ibreck 2013), and was known for its non-violence (George-Williams 2006). The CPP soon had a rural political wing called the Ghana Farmers' Congress which mobilized farmers to protest colonial policies. Trade unions embarked on strike actions. Market women were at the forefront of the campaign. The general public boycotted European imported goods to slow down the Gold Coast commerce and industry and to frustrate the colonial authorities into leaving (George-Williams 2006). The Ex-Servicemen served as campaign organisers and bodyguards for party leaders (Isreal 1992). With all hands on deck, Ghana achieved quasi-government in 1951 and full self-government in 1957. Other African countries with similar dynamics gained independence few years after Ghana did, confirming the idea, inspired by the example of Mohandas Gandhi and the Indian National Congress, that European powers could be pressured into fulfilling their promise of self-government (Branch and Mampilly 2015).

Proletarian protests

The growth of urban towns post-1874 made the establishment of municipal governments a necessity (Gocking 2005). To bring this into fruition, the Municipal Council Ordinance had to be passed. Fortescue (1990), for instance, indicated that efforts by the colonial government to introduce the Municipal Council Ordinance in Accra – to ensure that local expenditure was met from locally generated funds through direct taxation – was met with opposition from the people. However, the protest against the Municipal Council Ordinance was not limited to Accra. According to Gocking (2005, 52) "in 1906, when the ordinance was applied to Cape Coast, with its long history of opposition to colonial policies, there was considerable protest." The protest in Accra, Cape Coast and other colonial towns was largely influenced by the economic implications of the Municipal Council Ordinance (Fortescue 1990). The proletarian mobilisation theme of poverty and economic marginalisation among the people dominated the protest and thus there was resistance against the introduction of fees, taxes and charges which would further deepen poverty in urban towns. Although colonial government extracted a large amount of resources from Ghana, the creation of self-funded municipal councils demonstrates the reluctance of the British to plough back the gains from the resources.

Secondly, in the late 1930s, colonial Ghana witnessed another proletarian protest. This time it was what Rhoda Howard (1976) calls "The Ghana Cocoa Boycott of 1937–38," which derived from the feeling among the cocoa producers that the 1930s world economic crisis and its associated drop in cocoa prices was a deliberate attempt by the European cocoa-buying firms to make more profit for themselves and the firms abroad, while the ordinary cocoa producer earned very little. The capitalists "had developed an organisation that made it possible to carry out a sustained and systematic exploitation of labour-power in conjunction with market opportunity" (Kennedy 1977, 25). Johnson (1972) indicated that during the early years of the twentieth century, rich cocoa farmers identified with the *asafo* protests in resisting the exploitation and oppression of the TAs, and therefore had become an important political force in protest at the

time of the cocoa boycott of the 1930s. However, this protest involved not only the wealthy Ghanaian farmers but also the WGEs, peasant farmers, chiefs, cocoa brokers and migrant labourers (Alence 1990). The cocoa producers and their associates did not only refuse to sell cocoa to the European firms but also boycotted the consumption of imported European-made goods and eventually burned about forty tons of cocoa. Their mobilisation theme was to weaken the control that the expatriate cocoa-buying firms had on the marketing of peasant-produced cocoa abroad, which would eventually allow indigenous cocoa producers to be able to ship cocoa directly to the European and American markets without the involvement of the European middlemen (Howard 1976). Typical of proletarians, they sought to improve the socio-economic conditions of cocoa farmers and every Ghanaian involved in the production and marketing of cocoa.

By the 1940s, protest continued in the cocoa industry. This was a period when "Ghana's rainforest underwent a grave environmental crisis when its cocoa plantations faced a near-fatal breakdown from the vicious Cocoa Swollen Shoot Virus" (CSSV) (Danquah 2003, 43). Having been observed in one farm in Ghana's Eastern region in 1936, it soon became apparent that several farms in the region had been affected by the virus. As the world's largest producer of cocoa at the time, Ghana's economic fortune was on the verge of reverse as this virus continued to spread uncontrollably. Several attempts by the best of pathologists and in the most-equipped of laboratories to control the disease yielded no appreciable results. What is more, the neglect of eradication measures during the first and second world wars had allowed the virus to spread across Ghana's cocoa regions to the extent that colonial authorities, after the war, had to initiate an emergency program to eradicate the contagion (Danquah 1994, 2003). The Swollen Shoot Disease of Cocoa Order Number 148 of December 1946 was passed, ordering all cocoa farmers to cut off virus-infected trees. Initial attempts at enforcing the provisions of the order were met by opposition from cocoa farmers as well as everyone involved in the cocoa trade. Having halted for a while, the colonial authorities, by 1947, ordered compulsory cutting of all infected trees. Likewise, farmers also vehemently protested by clashing occasionally with the gang of government labourers who were paid on the basis of the number of trees they cut. The proletarian theme of economic marginalisation began to dominate the reasons for the opposition of the eradication program. The livelihood of the majority of rural people was at stake as cocoa production involved a huge investment of money and time. Diversification was very minimal because cocoa farmers and "their forebears had built their plantation as a family resource to last from generation to generation" (Danquah 1994, 5).

V. Post-colonial protests in Ghana

Proletarian protests

Unlike in the colonial era where protest was largely a collective effort of rural and urban people, the social composition of protests in post-colonial times has been urban, constituting formal sector workers, students, market traders and citizen groups among many others. For the most part, protests by urban workers have been influenced by the proletarian mobilisation theme of high cost of living, which concerns the society at large. In line with protest logics, these protests would not necessarily qualify as a

corporatist logic because it is championed by urban workers. Although some austerity-related urban protests occurred prior to the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in Ghana (See Boateng 2003; McLaughlin and Owusu-Ansah 1995), the onset of SAPs in April 1983 led to even more labour-led protests across the country. Studies show that about 150 SAPs-related protests were recorded in developing countries between the late 1970s and early 1990s (Auvinen 1996; Motta and Nilsen 2011).

In Ghana, in December 1983, SAPs raised basic food prices by between 166% (maize/sugar) to 254% (rice); between 1983 and 1985, the cost of water rose by 150%, electricity by 1000% and postage by 365%; and by 1985, there were massive retrenchments in the public sector and elimination of workers' end-service-benefit, which had been agreed through collective bargaining (Kraus 2007). The erosion of real incomes and increased poverty, occasioned by SAPs, had devastating consequence on women and children (Lugalla 1995). These ramifications did not go down well with trade unions, as they championed proletarian protests against the economic policies of government. For instance, Jon Kraus, in his extensive review of literature on trade unions and Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) struggles between 1983 and 1992, noted a number of confrontations between workers and government (See Kraus 2007). The PNDC government, prior, during or after trade union protests, arrested the leadership and members of trade unions, subjected some members to beatings till death as well as went on radio to discredit the claims of trade unions (Kraus 2007). Amidst the arrests, attacks and killings, Kraus notes that, "the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and its national unions persisted in … struggles against a highly repressive, antiunion regime, which had quashed all public opposition and the ability of other societal groups to articulate their interests or mobilize members" (Kraus 2007, 83).

In 1995, during Jerry John Rawlings' first term in office as a democratically-elected president, a value-added tax (VAT) of 17.5% on service and retail transactions (excluding social goods and services), which was introduced by the government, sparked a proletarian protest from citizens across the country (Gocking 2005; Opoku 2010; Prichard 2009). In line with the tax reforms of SAPs, VAT aimed at scrapping numerous old incentives and encumbrances built into the system on ad-hoc basis in the past, resulting in distortions in the economic and tax system (Osei 2000). According to McLaughlin and Owusu-Ansah (1995), the introduction of VAT immediately increased the prices of service and retail transactions and contributed to an already high rate of inflation. Many Ghanaians could not accommodate any further increases in the prices of goods and services that dates back to the early 1980s. Studies show that the introduction of VAT recorded the largest protest in Ghana since 1983 (McLaughlin and Owusu-Ansah 1995; Opoku 2010). Between 50,000 and 100,000 protesters (including thousands of ordinary people), led by a group called Alliance for Change (AFC), poured out on the street and eventually clashed with a pro-government Association of Communities for Defence of the Revolution (ACDR) (Gocking 2005; Opoku 2010). So violent was the clash that five people were killed and seventeen others were injured (Gocking 2005; McLaughlin and Owusu-Ansah 1995; Opoku 2010). The participation of thousands of ordinary people in the VAT protests was an indication the tax was highly unpopular (Opoku 2010). Although the VAT was eventually introduced four years later (Opoku 2010), at the time of occurrence of the violent protest, government was compelled to repeal the VAT law and reintroduced the old system of indirect taxation (Gocking 2005; McLaughlin and Owusu-Ansah 1995).

Corporatist protest

In the account of Gocking (2005), he indicated that while the 1980s SAPs protests had involved mainly middle and working class, university students announced their presence by protesting violently on the streets of Kumasi and Accra, resulting in the shutdown of universities across the country for one year, transforming educational institutions from "citadels of learning to battlegrounds" (Adejumobi 2000, 204). The students – motivated by the corporatist logic of protecting their welfare and general interest – protested against government resolve to make them pay their tuition and boarding through loans (McLaughlin and Owusu-Ansah 1995). Particularly, the students (especially those from poor homes) saw the removal of subsidies on tuition, food and boarding as a threat to successful completion of their university education (Adedeji 2001). Around the same period, Nigerian university students also protested against the increases in meal charges and accommodation fees (Adejumobi 2000). In the period 1980–1989, student protests were recorded in over twenty-five countries across the African continent (Nkinyangi 1991). The recent situation in South Africa where students protested the increment of tuition fees on the grounds that students from poor homes may drop out of university, indicate that university students are still a force in African urban politics.

Apart from the university students, many more groups in Ghana also protested SAPs policies to the benefit of their members. Peasants protested against new borehole and well fees, consumers against the end of subsidized goods and rising prices, businessmen protested restraints on credit and 30% interest rates, industrial managers the liberalization of trade which undercuts the sale of Ghanaian goods, and some state corporations their sale to private interests or liquidation (Kraus 1991). Emmanuel Awuah also reported that market traders in the Kumasi Central Market protested the indirect effect of SAPs on their capital accumulation and survival in the marketplace (Awuah 1997). Awuah further indicated that market traders were particularly unhappy about the fact that higher fees and taxes introduced by local governments did not result in improved infrastructure in the market.

A corporatist protest worthy of note is what Obeng-Odoom (2014) calls "the historic 1992 demonstration" by the railway sector workers in Accra on the eve of Ghana's transition to the fourth republican constitutional democracy. The policy of state withdrawal from public services since the onset of the Economic Recovery Programme in the 1980s had manifested in deteriorating working conditions in the railway sector. The expectation of the Bretton Woods Institutions and the Ghana government that private investment in rail transport would improve performance in the sector was yet to materialise. In the face of worsening workers' emolument and general benefits, the railway workers – totalling about 12,000 – planned a surprise visit to the seat of government in Accra. Although security agents attempted to foil the plans of the workers by arresting the leadership on their way to Accra, the explanation that they were on their way to stop the protest by the workers compelled the security agents to release them. They made their first stop at the Ministry of Finance, where they "vandalised state property … and lowered the national flag of Ghana, while hoisting their own … railway flag. The workers became extremely aggressive upon realising that the Minister was not sympathetic to their concerns. As they headed towards the residence of the President, they were met by a heavily

armed police and army contingent, who overpowered and injured some of the railwaymen. Eventually, the workers retreated and congregated at the train stations in Accra, where the leadership advised them to go back to their base in Sekondi-Takoradi and allow their thumb to speak for them in the election which was scheduled to take place the following day (Obeng-Odoom 2014). Although the incumbent retained power, the workers made their presence felt in Accra.

Republican protests

It must be noted that some of the protests that occurred in post-colonial times fit into the republican logic. Aside from the protests against SAPs policies due to worsening living conditions, protesters oftentimes demanded political transition from military regime to liberal democracy. In the work of Jon Kraus, a leader of one of the trade unions said at the opening ceremony of trade union delegate congress in March 1987 that "we cannot be concerned about strengthening democracy inside our union without being concerned about democracy for the popular masses …" (Kraus 2007, 110). The persistent call by the labour unions for a return to civilian rule led to government consideration of a local government system in Ghana. However, the problem was that leaders of local governments were to be handpicked by the PNDC government based on personality and service to community (Ho-Won 1998). On the May Day of 1987, a leader of the trade unions said "the PNDC's call for district assemblies must necessarily be linked to election of leaders at the national level and election of the government by the people as a whole" (Kraus 2007, 110). Nevertheless, the PNDC persistently rejected national level multiparty system of governance, with the claim that political parties do not represent the broader interest of Ghanaians (Ho-Won 1998). During this period, similar claims were made by Presidents of Kenya, Cameroun, Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Interestingly, these leaders had soon forgotten that they and their predecessors challenged colonial authorities when they used similar justification in delaying independence in Africa (Bratton and Van De Walle 1992).

During the early 1990s, Ghana was one of the African countries where there was republican pressure on the government to accept multiparty democracy (Bratton and Van De Walle 1992). In August 1990, a citizen movement – the Movement for Freedom and Justice (MFJ) – was founded to protest against the continuous reign of an authoritarian and military regime in Ghana (Seddon and Zeilig 2005). This movement was led by Professor Adu Boahen, a lecturer at the University of Ghana, who had earlier in 1988 blamed the PNDC government for the culture of silence in the country (Gocking 2005; Opoku 2010). MFJ protested for 'a return to democratic, constitutional rule and immediate end to restrictions on civil liberties' (Kraus 2007, 112). The movement had the support of the students, teachers and religious bodies among many other associations (Kraus 2007). Simultaneously, there was external pressure from the Bretton Woods Institutions and western world for Ghana to embrace democracy and the rule of law (Seddon and Zeilig 2005), because a representative political system is an essential foundation for deregulation and liberalisation (Ho-Won 1998). Eventually, the combined effect of the internal protest from MFJ and the external pressure from donors led to the 1992 national elections in Ghana. Other African countries such as Burkina Faso, Cameroun and Zimbabwe, among many

others, also embraced liberal democracy during this period. Elections notwithstanding, many of these African leaders, including Ghana's Rawlings, retained power. While Rawlings and others were ousted after two terms, others like Paul Biya of Cameroun are still President due to the absence of the provision of two presidential terms in their constitutions.

VI. Contemporary protests in Ghana

Proletarian protests

As indicated in Figure 1, Ghana has witnessed a number of protests in contemporary times. To begin with, we argue that recent protests related to the Ghanaian economy have been largely proletarian. The protesters have been largely trade unions and civil society but they have pursued the general interest of society. These protests have been driven by the dissatisfaction of the citizenry with the country's economic challenges such as withdrawal of subsidies on goods and services, a poorly performing currency and increasing taxation and its resultant high cost of living. For instance, in July 2014, a publication by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported that thousands of workers across the country took to the street to protest against high cost of living and Ghana's worsening economic conditions (British Broadcasting Corporation 2014). According to the BBC, the concerns of the workers had to do with rising inflation, removal of subsidy on petroleum products and depreciation of the cedi, among many others. The problem of high cost of living is beyond the borders of Ghana. Recent studies by Bettina Engels have shown that high cost of living has caused proletarian protests in Burkina Faso (Engels 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2017). In another instance, trade unions in Nigeria in February 2017 staged a protest against high cost of living (Business Day 2017). In many African settings, high cost of living is constructed as rising prices of goods and services against slight or no increase in income, thus the inability of families to afford basic household responsibilities (Engels 2015c).

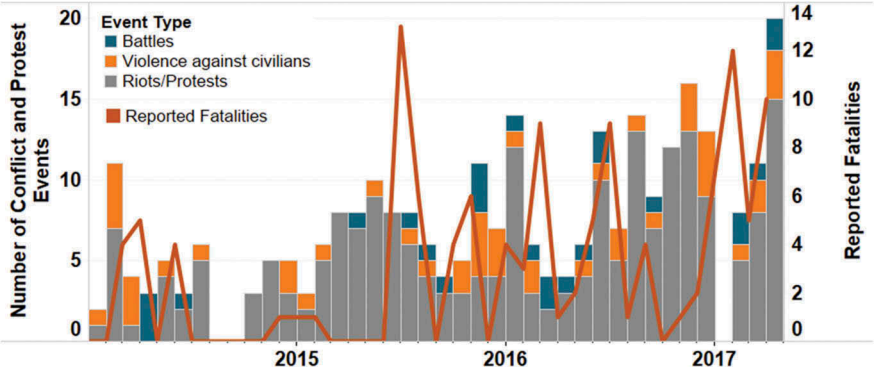

Figure 1. Conflict, riot and protest events and fatalities in Ghana, over January 2014–April 2017.
Source: Armed conflict location and event data project (ACLED) (2017)

Looking again through the proletarian lenses, we see protests that are related to erratic power supply and poor nature of road infrastructure in Ghana. A good example of the latter was witnessed in 2013 in Ashaiman. Angered by the poor nature of their roads and its health implications, a group of about one hundred youth of Ashaiman blocked the road in the early hours of the day to prevent motorists from plying the road. Studies show that the protest became so violent that the Ashaiman district police command had to request for a reinforcement of about two hundred military-cum-police personnel to patrol the community in order to bring the situation under control (Aidoo 2014). Kojo Aidoo argues that although the dusty road was the main reason for this protest, the root cause of the Ashaiman protest was a "long pent-up feeling in the community resulting from decades of alienation, marginalisation, disempowerment and dispossession" (Aidoo 2014, 199). The Ashaiman protest signals the likelihood of protests from other communities in Ghana that lack such basic infrastructure. Beyond Ghana, it may also be a reminder to neighbouring French-speaking African countries, where studies have shown that "road and street networks … are in a terrible state of disrepair" (Njoh 2004, 448).

Furthermore, erratic power supply has been a reason for some contemporary protests in Ghana. Several promises have been made by successive governments to end the crisis but all to no avail. In one instance, an Energy Minister promised to leave office if he was unable to end the erratic power supply by the end of 2016 but the situation remains the same to date. Although a recent study by Jonathan Silver (2015) has shown that the erratic power supply in Ghana is an age-old problem, protest on the issue is fairly recent. In February 2015, the National Patriotic Party (NPP), Ghana's largest opposition political party, led a mass protest against the power supply challenges in the country. The protesters included leadership of the party, legislators, market traders, the aged and the disabled among many others (Laary 2015). About three months later, a group of protesters carrying torchlights and lanterns, led by some celebrities in Ghana's entertainment industry, marched on the principal streets of Accra to express their displeasure over the erratic supply of power in the country. This came as a surprise to many because it was the first time celebrities had mobilized their fans and the public to protest the menace. Interestingly, the impact of the power cut in Ghana has been heavily felt by poor communities and small businesses compared to the elite neighbourhoods and big corporations, a situation Jonathan Silver argues dates back to the historical pattern of splintered urbanism produced through racial segregation during the colonial era and its continued legacies in the post-colonial and contemporary times (Silver 2015). To put the issue in a broader perspective, the erratic power supply is largely an African problem. Compared with Ghana, Nigeria seems worse, having been described as a country with an unreliable and rickety national grid (The Economist 2014). In totality, "power supply in Sub-Saharan Africa is notoriously unreliable" (Eberhard et al. 2011, 7) and may continue to be a reason for people to protest for improved power infrastructure.

Corporatist protests

In recent times, we have witnessed some corporatist protest from "formalised" market traders in two cities – Kumasi and Cape Coast – in Ghana. In 2015, the preparations towards the demolition of the Kejetia Lorry Terminal (KLT) to make way for the first phase of the redevelopment of Kumasi Central Market Project led to a series of protests from thousands of members of the Kejetia Traders Association (KTA) and the Kejetia Petty Traders Association (KPTA). The

market traders, who had been given two months to move from the KLT to a temporary relocation site, challenged the city authorities in Kumasi to produce documents that showed that the terminal was part of the redevelopment project. They added that the inclusion of the KLT was an afterthought. However, information from a Parliamentary Hansard, dated 18 July 2014, indicate that the KLT was actually expected to be part of the redevelopment project; hence the delay in informing the market traders may have led to the protest. Earlier in 2014, market traders in Cape Coast had also resisted efforts by the local government to regenerate the Kotokuraba market, although they did not embark on street protest as was witnessed in Kumasi. Nevertheless, upon completion of the market in Cape Coast in 2017, there have been protests from some market traders who believe there is unfairness in the processes of allocation of stalls and stores in the new market.

Throughout their protests, the market traders in both cities made some corporatist demands of the local governments in both cities: a suitable place of temporary relocation, a written agreement assuring them of their return when the redevelopment is completed, compensation for compulsory relocation and full details of documents covering the market regeneration projects. The market traders adopted every identifiable strategy – mass demonstration, press conferences, radio and television shows, and social media – to give public attention to their plight (Awuah 1997). In both Kumasi and Cape Coast, the additional strategy was to sue the city authorities in the court of law and to refuse any movement until the court had given judgement. Interestingly, the courts in Kumasi and Cape Coast decided in favour of the city authorities and market traders had no option but to move to the temporary place of relocation. These protests derive from the agency of the market traders to protect their survival and capital accumulation in markets coupled with several years of low participation of market traders in the institutional processes of regenerating urban markets in Ghana (Post 2001). In recent times, studies have shown that market traders in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) and Kaduna (Nigeria) have resisted and protested the continuous exclusion and manipulation of market redevelopment projects by local governments (Harsch 2009; Tauna 2017). Perhaps these protests are a wake-up call for other city authorities in Ghana and other African countries to employ participatory approaches in regenerating markets. The traders' protest is also deeply rooted in recent urban analysis that "looks at markets as contested spaces which are undergoing processes of gentrification" (Gonzalez 2018, 7). The protest suggests traders' apprehension that city authorities would displace them to convert a traditional urban marketplace – with a majority of stalls and stores owned by small-scale and petty traders – into shopping malls or modern market complex which would accommodate large supermarkets and grocery stores owned by local and regional chains. The protest could also be interpreted as a response to the accumulation by urban dispossession, whereby the entrepreneurial state, through regeneration of market infrastructure in cities, creates opportunities for emerging retail giants (Gillespie 2016).

Republican protests

Recent protests in Ghana have also focused on corruption – a republican mobilization theme, although this is not to argue that corruption is a new issue in the country. Annually, at least one case of corruption makes it to the national headlines. The huge embezzlement by public officials at the National Service Secretariat; the revelation by Anas Aremeyaw Anas, a Ghanaian investigative journalist, of corruption in the judiciary

and the Ghana Revenue Service; and the order by the Chief of Staff to the Attorney General to recover an amount of 1.9 million cedis wrongfully paid to Smarttys Management Limited in respect of a bus branding contract are a few examples of recent corruption cases recorded in Ghana. It must be noted that many times, calls for an end to corruption have featured in trade union protests. Consequently, only relatively few specific recent protest focus on "only" corruption. A study by Aning and Annan (2015) noted recent corruption allegations that attracted protest. They indicated that the Alliance for Accountable Governance (AAG), in September 2014, took to the street to demonstrate over allegations that the Commissioner of the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAG) had spent 180,000 cedis on her accommodation, US$4,500 on a rented apartment and had refused to return twenty Toyota vehicles donated by the Danish International Development Agency to be distributed to regional offices. In May, 2017, a protest organised by an Accra-based radio station called on the new government to retrieve monies stolen by public officials in the previous government as well as public sector workers named in the Auditor-General's report.

VII. Conclusions and policy implications

This study has adopted the theoretical model of protest logics to understand the dynamics of protests in Africa from the colonial era through the post-colonial period to contemporary times, using Ghana as a lens and case study. Although the theoretical model suggests five protest logics, the longitudinal analysis revealed a historical continuity in three protest logics, comprising of proletarian, republican and corporatist. Proletarian protests have been motivated by themes such as high cost of living, economic marginalisation and poor power and road infrastructure. Findings also indicated republican themes such as participatory or inclusive governance and corruption. Specific groups were also found to have made corporatist demands such as improved working conditions and the provision of employment. Per our analyses, we argue that the remaining two protest logics – liberal and partisan – could easily merge into the main ones. Protests influenced by liberal themes are not common in the case of Ghana, although issues of gender, disability and homosexuality have occasionally received national attention. Similarly, while political parties and politicians have been involved in a number of protests in Ghana, they pursue mostly proletarian or republican themes, although their partisan interest cannot be overemphasised.

Colonial protests involved the collective effort of mass action and the educated elites and activated rural-urban connection in order to get the attention of their adversaries. As seen in the selected episodes, class struggle and accumulation by dispossession largely shaped colonial protests in Ghana. Class struggle is underpinned by the belief that Ghanaians – not the British – are capable of managing the affairs of the country. The struggle not only existed between the colonial administration and the WGEs, who led the fight to gain independence and assume the highest political position in Ghana; but also between the traditional authorities and the *asafo*, who resisted the implementation of colonial policies and legislations in their communities. Furthermore, the British colonial ideology of resource exploitation facilitated a process of accumulation by dispossession. For instance, a clear case is the 1897 Crown Lands Bill, where Ghanaians resisted the take-over of forest lands and mineral resources by colonial authorities. While in the colonial

times, protests were led by social movements such as the *asafo* companies and the GCARPS and were national or transnational in character, protests in the post-colonial period have been largely spontaneous, episodic and local by nature.

More so, in post-colonial and contemporary times, protests in Ghana have taken place wholly within the urban enclave. These protests have involved both urban poor and middle class (Obeng-Odoom 2017). This study underscores that urban protests in Ghana seek not only to confront the failings of neoliberalism across scales (Obeng-Odoom 2017) but also the processes of splintered urbanism, gentrification, accumulation by urban dispossession and corruption that characterise new forms of urban infrastructure and development. As captured in Obeng-Odoom (2017, 6), splintered urbanism in Ghana manifests in the manner in which "not only are there differences in how urban services and resources are experienced, accessed and controlled but the varieties are also socially differentiated". Gentrification and accumulation by urban dispossession in urban Ghana are witnessed not only in new public urban infrastructure such as markets but also in the housing sector, where traditional authorities have disposed large tracts of urban communal lands to real estate multinationals to develop luxurious housing (Gillespie 2016). Amidst the failings of neoliberalism, splintered urbanism, accumulation by urban dispossession and gentrification, the Ghanaian becomes angered when corruption is revealed in public urban projects and programmes. The penchant of public officials to inflate prices of projects and programmes has become a great source of worry to many Ghanaians. In order to fully understand the recent wave of urban protests in Africa, we have found in the Ghanaian case that it is a tremendous task for future empirical urban research to scrutinize the particularities and commonalities of urban protests in Africa and elaborate on commonalities and differences with urban protests and resistance against gentrification in the global north (Helbrecht 2018).

For this purpose, Ghana remains an important case for African protest analysis because it is currently implementing neoliberal policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Its urban space is still socially differentiated. The urban poor continue to be displaced and dispossessed. Petty and grand corruption is the order of the day. It is for these reasons, among others, that the Ghana case serves as a learning opportunity for other African countries. Based on our findings, we conclude that contemporary protests in Ghana and most of Africa are influenced by issues of high cost of living, participatory governance, erratic power supply, unemployment, poor road infrastructure and corruption. African governments may have to tackle the high cost of living from its sources, which include food, fuel, education, health and infrastructure. For instance, in addition to providing farmers with fertilizers, governments can improve roads to reduce transport costs. An efficient free education policy at all levels of education and national health insurance may also reduce the cost of living. Although these policies are already in operation in Ghana and elsewhere, inefficacies in implementation have limited its effect on cost of living. Increasing the minimum wage can also be an avenue to increase income for the majority of people. Central and local governments in Africa alike should also endeavour to spread infrastructural projects across communities. Where an old infrastructure is redeveloped, local governments should adopt participatory approaches to ensure the involvement of displaced communities at all stages of the institutional processes. Youth unemployment is at its peak across the continent and it is high time African governments opened up the public sector and attracted more foreign direct investment in order to create jobs. African governments should also do more than just paying lip-service to ending corruption.

Notes

1. This constitutes about 100,000 men who had returned to Ghana after the Second World War, having served in the Gold Coast Regiment (GCR) of the Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF) in East Africa and Burma (Isreal 1992).
2. The *asafo* literally means "war people" (osa = war, fo = people) and the term is used in the Akan (or twi) language in Ghana to mean a system of organizing the men of a town or coastal city for military purposes or any organized group of commoners under joint leadership (See Chukwukere 1980; Fortescue 1990; Simensen 1974 for a detailed understanding of the *asafo* system).
3. It is believed that these rules were drafted by the western-educated African elites because the *asafo* companies did not have the academic rigor to draft such a detailed document.
4. This approved document was later referred to as the "Magna Carta of Kwahu" .
5. The first national party, the United Gold Coast Congress (UGCC) was established in 1947, under the leadership of the member of GCARPS.

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Notes on contributors

Lewis Abedi Asante is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Geography, Humboldt-Universität Zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany. His doctoral research seeks to understand the urban regeneration process in Cape Coast, Ghana. Lewis' current research is on urban regeneration, residential mobility, housing and real estate development.

Ilse Helbrecht is a Professor of Geography and Chair of Cultural and Social Geography at Humboldt-Universität Zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany. Her research interests include gentrification, urban studies, tourism and housing. She has published extensively in high impact journals. Her most recent book analyses displacement processes and adaptation strategies in a gentrified community.

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